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International news in brief

Agca claim of CIA link is recanted

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ROME — Papal assailant Mehmet Ali Agca recanted his own suggestion of links with the CIA during questioning yesterday about a letter in which he had written that he hoped his "friends in the CIA" would help him get transferred from Rome to another prison.

Agca is the chief prosecution witness in the trial of four other Turks and three Bulgarians accused of helping him in his attempt to kill Pope John Paul II in 1981. He is serving a life sentence for the shooting, which he claims was carried out on the orders from the Soviet and Bulgarian secret services.

Judge Severino Santiapichi questioned Agca closely yesterday about a letter he allegedly wrote from his prison cell and tried to slip past prison censors. Santiapichi said the envelope bore the name and address of an unidentified woman. Under continuing questioning from Santiapichi yesterday, Agca acknowledged that he "never had ties with the CIA."

The trial, which is on summer recess until mid-September, has reconvened in a special session for several days for questioning of Agca and several key witnesses in Holland, West Germany and Turkey.